The First 90 Days

Idea In Short

The first 90 days for new CIOs and CTOs are crucial for building relationships, assessing the organization's current technology landscape, achieving visible quick wins, and setting a clear strategic direction. By understanding stakeholder needs, aligning IT with business goals, and fostering collaboration, leaders can establish credibility and pave the way for ongoing success and innovation.

New Chief Information Officers [CIOs] and Chief Technology Officers [CTOs] face a critical challenge in their first 90 days, as this period sets the tone for their leadership and can significantly influence their long-term success. Here's a structured approach for new CIOs and CTOs to maximize their impact during this initial phase.

First 30 Days: Understanding and Assessment

- Engage with Stakeholders: Build relationships with key stakeholders, including the CEO, CFO, and department heads. Understand their perspectives on technology's role within the organization and gather insights on existing challenges and opportunities
- Assess the Current State: Conduct a thorough evaluation of the existing IT infrastructure, team capabilities, and technology landscape. This includes understanding how IT is perceived within the organization—whether as a cost center or a strategic partner
- Observe Operations: Spend time with different departments to observe workflows and identify pain points. This hands-on approach will help uncover issues that reports may not reveal
- Set Baselines: Establish benchmarks for current performance metrics, staffing capabilities, and technology usage. This will serve as a foundation for measuring progress later on

Days 31–60: Quick Wins and Strategic Planning

- Identify Quick Wins: Look for immediate opportunities to improve efficiency, such as addressing underutilized software licenses or streamlining processes. These quick wins can help build credibility and demonstrate value to the organization
- Develop an IT Roadmap: Begin drafting a strategic IT plan that aligns with the organization's overall business goals. This roadmap should outline key initiatives, timelines, and expected outcomes
- Communicate Your Vision: Share your observations and initial plans with the organization to set clear expectations. Transparency will increase trust and engagement among team members and stakeholders
- Promote Team Collaboration: Encourage open communication within your team and across departments. Establish regular check-ins to discuss progress on initiatives and gather feedback

Days 61–90: Implementation and Long-Term Strategy

- Execute Key Initiatives: Start implementing the most impactful projects identified during the first two months. Focus on initiatives that align closely with business priorities to ensure support from leadership
- Measure Success: Establish key performance indicators [KPIs] to track progress on your initiatives. Regularly review these metrics with stakeholders to demonstrate impact and adjust strategies as needed
- Build a Culture of Innovation: Promote an environment where team members feel empowered to share ideas and take ownership of projects. This cultural shift can lead to more significant innovations in technology use across the organization
- Prepare for Future Challenges: As you settle into your role, start thinking about long-term technology trends and how they might impact your organization. Consider how emerging technologies can be leveraged for competitive advantage

By following this structured approach during their first 90 days, new CIOs and CTOs can effectively position themselves as strategic leaders who not only understand the technology landscape but also align IT initiatives with broader business objectives. This proactive engagement will help establish trust, promote collaboration and set the stage for ongoing success in their roles.

Summary

New CIOs and CTOs should dedicate their first 90 days to stakeholder engagement, deep organizational assessment, identifying early wins, and strategic planning. Executing key projects, measuring progress, and cultivating a culture of innovation and open communication sets the foundation for aligning technology with business objectives and ensuring long-term impact.